FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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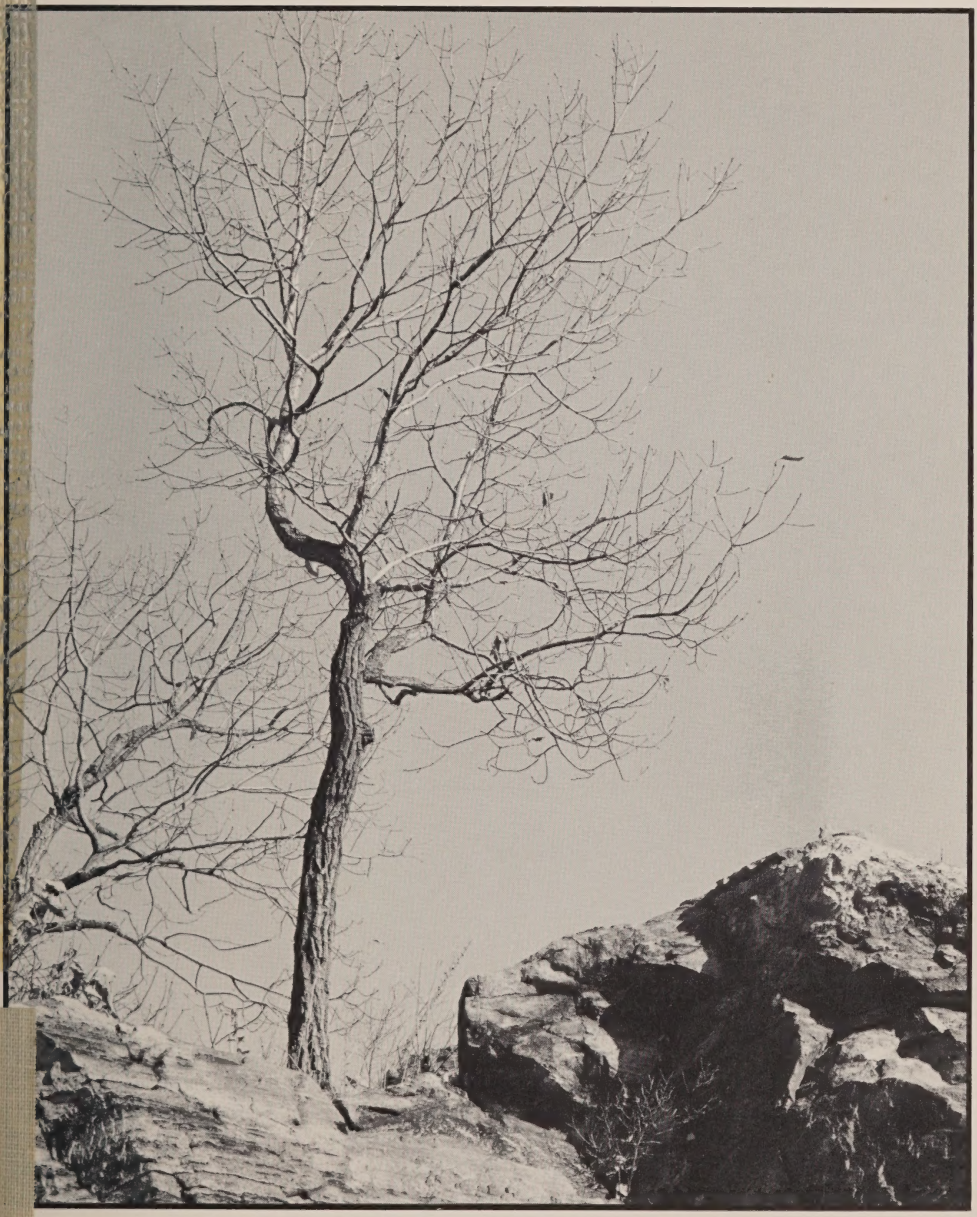

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A Message From the President 2

From the Editor 4

Insights 6

I Have Learned a Lot from Trees, *by* Robert O'Rourke 7

New Poetry, *by* Thomas More Page 11

Healing is Feeling Love's Presence, *by* John Allan 13

Spirituality and Everyday Life: As Day Follows Night, *by* Avis Crowe 18

A Meditation, *by* Lisa Boscane 21

Prayers 23

Interfaith Network 26

Encountering God, *by* Huston Smith 28

"A Transforming Experience": Embracing Loneliness, Finding Love . . ., *by* Sandra Gilbert 34

Ask Angela, *by* Barbara Ackerman 37

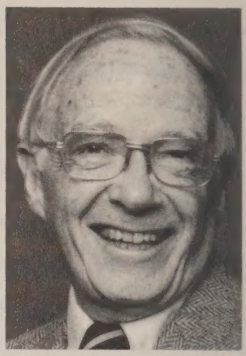
Home Again, Home Again . . . , *by* Jane Huggins 40

Sufism: One Path to Peace, *by* K.M.P. Mohamed Cassim 43

Student Section: Roody, *by* Erin B. Charles 47

Letters to the Editor 50

Cover Photograph by Janet Gnall



One of our best friends from the West Coast, Sheila Holtgrieve, wrote us in October saying, "I am upset, saddened, and confused by the War in the Gulf. Peace is always more challenging to 'wage' than war, and it seems to me that we collective humans just aren't up to that yet. It's the same with our dislike of other people. It's easier to dislike those we don't know or understand than to get to know them and their fears, hopes, and problems."

Why is that? Why does humankind so often choose violence as a solution to conflicts—in the family, among neighbors, between nations or religions . . . whatever form the "other" may take? We even think of nature as an enemy that is to be "conquered" when it resists our grandiose plans for "development." Hostility and a dominator attitude toward nature inevitably breed hostility and violence toward the "other" in all forms, be they women, minorities, the homeless, the poor, other beliefs, other nationalities.

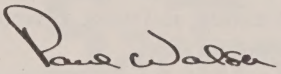
2,500 years ago, the Buddha taught that violence is the greatest evil, and is to be avoided in all its forms, from the killing of humans and animals to the intellectual coercion of those who think otherwise. In the first century A.D. Jesus taught the same message: Thou shall not kill. Turn the other cheek. Love thy neighbor as thyself.

We all pay lip service to those commandments, but why is it so hard to actually practice them? In part, it may be because too many of us have been misled into believing that our religion affirms the moral right to smite our "enemies" whenever our personal or national interests seem threatened, and to plunder the Earth and its resources in our frantic pursuit of more money, more power, more "progress."

Perhaps the problem is that we have too narrow a view of our "self." We need to expand our idea of "self" to include all of Creation and to realize that our self interest (including that of our children and their children, and of the planet itself) is inextricably involved with the well being of everything in Creation. As Chief Seattle said before surrendering his people's land to the "Great Chief in Washington," "All things are con-

nected like the blood that unites one family. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the children of the Earth." We cannot ultimately serve our own best interests by harming others, be they family members, neighbors, or members of other races, creeds, colors, or nationalities.

So it is with ourselves that we must begin. Through prayer and meditation we may, in time, bring about the spiritual awakening that alone can transform the fear and anger within us into love and compassion, into caring and concern for all of God's "others." As we gradually open our hearts to others, as we expand the circumference of our "self" to include all that God created, we are in fact "waging" peace in the most effective way possible.



Paul Walsh

The Rule of St. Benedict has been a guide to the spiritual life for over 1500 years. Countless men and women the world over have found peace through its lifestyle. Now there is a book about St. Benedict's Rule that shows how one can take the "dust and clay of everyday and turn it into beauty" (*Wisdom Distilled from the Daily*, by Joan Chittister, OSB, Harper and Row, 1990). Whatever your religion, this book will give you a sense that the now is holy, and everyday can indeed be turned into beauty.

The key to the lifestyle is listening, the essential attitude is humility, and the secret of right relationships lies in a spirit of community, meaning that people must be more intent on empowering each other than on enriching themselves. The means to these lofty goals lie in prayer, spiritual reading and work. Chapters on each of these topics glow with intelligence and love.

A chapter on work shows that ancient religious ideals are timeless. Work is a gift, Chittister writes, one is to work "with a vision in mind" and everyone must participate, rich or poor, strong or weak. In the Benedictine monastery, from its beginnings in classist Rome in the sixth century, everyone had to serve at table, the children of nobles as well as the children of serfs. Work was essential for salvation and self-development, and idleness was seen as the enemy of the soul. "There is no room in this lifestyle," Chittister writes, "for the frail to shift the dishes onto others simply because they are subject to chronic headaches." It is only by taking full responsibility for the tasks at hand, she says, that one can experience the spiritual and sanctifying value of work.

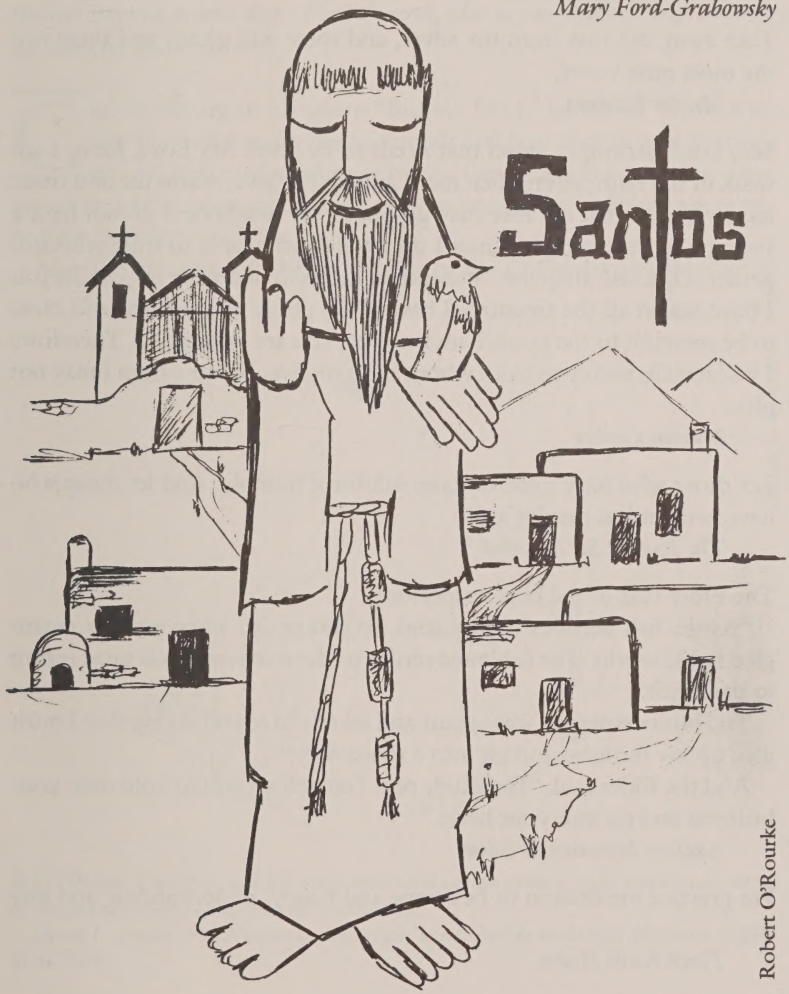
In a chapter on wisdom, Chittister makes a compelling case for the monastic "way." One does not need to be a monastic to value and strive to acquire the attitudes she describes:

> It may be only from a distance that we see best. It may be those who do not have money who best know that money is not essential to the good life. It may be those who each have only a bed and books and one closet full of clothes in one small room to call their own who can clearly realize what clutter can do to a life. . . . It may be only those who stand alone in life who can really know what community is all about. It may be those who are powerless by choice who can best demonstrate the power that comes from not having power. It may be those who have decided against amassing personal property who can realize that bankruptcy and welfare and sufficiency are not the worst things that can happen to a person in life.

> It may be those who are unmarried by choice who can most sensitively hear the abandoned and the widowed and the lonely. It may only be those who have no corporate or ecclesial ladder to climb who can best speak to equality.

It may indeed be. One thousand, five hundred years old, the Benedictine Rule would seem to be a reliable path up the mountain that people of all religions want to climb.

Mary Ford-Grabowsky



Robert O'Rourke

Walk together, talk together, work together, o you people of the earth, and then, only then, can you have peace.

Vedic Teaching

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by the infinite expectation of the dawn.

Henry David Thoreau

Take away the rust from the silver, and there will gleam and shine out the most pure vessel.

Meister Eckhart

See, Lord, an empty vessel that needs to be filled. My Lord, fill it. I am weak in the faith; strengthen me. I am cold in love; warm me and make me fervent so that my love may go out to my neighbor. I do not have a strong and firm faith; at times I doubt and am unable to trust you altogether. O, Lord, help me. Strengthen my faith and trust in you. In you I have sealed all the treasures I have. I am poor; you are rich and came to be merciful to the poor. I am a sinner; you are upright . . . Therefore, I will remain with you from whom I can receive, but to whom I may not give.

Martin Luther

Let those who have need of more ask for it humbly. And let those who have need of less thank God.

The Rule of St. Benedict

The Elder said to the businessperson:

"As the fish perishes on dry land, so you perish when you get entangled in the world. The fish must return to the water, and you must return to the Spirit."

The businessperson was aghast and asked: "Are you saying that I must give up my business and go into a monastery?"

And the Elder said, "Definitely not. I am telling you to hold onto your business and go into your heart."

Ancient Monastic Wisdom

We practice meditation to be serene and happy, understanding and loving.

Thich Naht Hahn

I Have Learned a Lot from Trees

ROBERT O'ROURKE

In 1990 FiP celebrated its first annual Worldwide Day of Prayer and Meditation to Help Heal Mother Earth. As we look forward to another "Worldwide Day," we bring you Bob O'Rourke's poetic words about a Colorado effort to save the endangered prairie dog. "Mother earth, give us your babies," he prays, "we will care for them. Amen."

Carl Sandburg in his poem "Buffalo Dusk" lamented "those who saw the buffaloes by the thousands and how they pawed the prairie sod into dust with their hoofs, their great heads down, pawing on in a great pageant of dusk: those who saw the buffaloes are gone, and the buffaloes are gone."

Much of the natural, abounding life of the Colorado prairies is gone

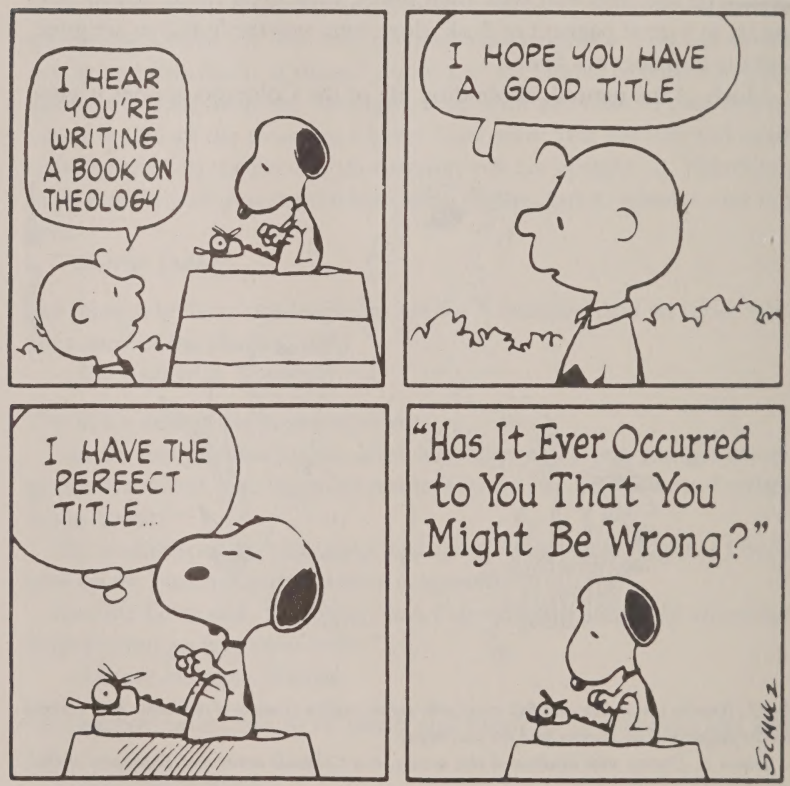
Susan L. Dorsey

Bob O'Rourke is a writer and folk artist who carves santos *(statues of the saints most revered by the people of New Mexico and the southwest).*

Susan L. Dorsey, who illustrated this article, is a Colorado artist and illustrator of children's books.

now. The once numerous hawks, falcons, eagles, bobcats, coyotes, badgers, foxes and ferrets have all but vanished along with the Cheyenne, Arapaho and Sioux who watched the cruel slaughter of the buffaloes. Black Elk, Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux, envisioned the life of each animal as sacred and spiritually symbolic. He said, "All things are the works of the Great Spirit. We should know well that It is within all things: the trees, the grasses, the rivers, the mountains and all the four-legged animals, and the winged peoples." This mystical old man in his deep wisdom knew the vanishing prairie would someday impoverish the nation. His degree of spirituality is rarely found in our world today.

There is one small prairie animal—a hardy species—who tenaciously holds on to life—the prairie dog! In spite of long abuse by trapping,


I HEAR YOU'RE WRITING A BOOK ON THEOLOGY
I HOPE YOU HAVE A GOOD TITLE
I HAVE THE PERFECT TITLE...
"Has It Ever Occurred to You That You Might Be Wrong?"
SCHULZ

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shooting and gassing it manages to survive somehow even though its number have been reduced by 90% since 1900. These benevolent little critters still greet the morning sun with a song and watch it fade beyond the mountains each evening. They can often be seen scurrying between roaring bulldozers and crushing earthmovers as new roads and housing projects replace them and the yucca and the meadow lark.

A small group of people have organized to rescue the prairie dogs and relocate them in a safer environment away from "progress." Last week an incident occurred as this group worked a field where a church was to be built.

A settlement of prairie dogs was in harm's way since their "town" (they live within a closely defined system of clans and territory), conflicted with the new church construction. The minister would have happily solved the problem by shooting each defenseless animal but the property was within city limits making such a solution illegal. Prior to this year he had authorized poisoning but still some thirty-five of the little creatures survived. A woman from our group, Prairie Dog Action, prevailed upon the minister to consider allowing us to *live* trap and resettle the "town" in another area.

After several weeks of effort we had successfully relocated all but six or seven of the timorous animals. A day was chosen to complete the task. A crew of three began the work at the same time the minister visited the sight, reiterating the same litany that shooting the dogs would have been so much easier. One of our crew asked if he had ever read the book of Job:

> But ask now the beasts, and they will teach you;
> the birds of the air, and they will teach you;
> or speak to the earth and it will teach you;
> and the fish of the sea will declare unto you.

It was suggested that even a lowly prairie dog, also one of God's creatures, might have something of value to teach—we forgot to include the words of Walking Buffalo:

> I have learned a lot from trees; sometimes about the weather, sometimes about the animals, sometimes about the Great Spirit. The whispers of God and God's Love flow through all of nature.

Someone did ask if the minister respected Gandhi who said, "The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

The minister replied to only the latter quote saying he didn't think much of Gandhi; "I talk only with the Lord" (might be an excellent idea to listen once in a while also) and, "Anyway, animals do not have souls." Someone in our group said, "But they do have feelings and they do suffer." He laughed and our crew walked away to resume our prayer-in-action posture kneeling over the burrow of one more prairie dog; repeating a prayer that would be appreciated by the Cheyenne, Arapaho and Sioux,

Mother Earth,
Give us your babies.
We will care for them.
Amen.

THOMAS MORE PAGE

Candle and Bread

My friend,

You are sent to be

Light-bearer
Bread-giver

To bear in your eyes the light that has broken
Through the darkness and pain of your journey
So that others may find the way to their destiny:

To carry in your hands the warm bread
You have kneaded in love
So that others may be fed to satiety.

Go now, my friend

Give away the candle
Give away the bread

And be

Candle
Bread.

A Birthday Prayer

Lord,
let the time of mid-life
be midwife
to me
and birth a new life
a new creation
a new fire
aflame from the pyre
of the past.

Thomas More Page is Director of the Institute of Theology and Spirituality in Santa Barbara, CA. A Xaverian Brother, he headed his order for many years in Rome.

A Small Prayer

Deliver me, O Lord, from
Whatever there is in eyes
That see the outside of me
And let me catch them by surprise.

Deliver me, O Lord, into
Whatever there is in eyes
That see into me
And let me catch myself by surprise.

A Prayer for Leavetaking

If the heart grows heavy
As an adamantine stone
May some lost lark find refuge there
And a lilting song intone.

And if sadness sits upon your winter face
And heavy knits your brow
May spring descend with flowers bright
And laugh upon the broken bough.

If ever your steps lead you
To barren streams and dry springs
May geese wheel in from the west
Upon their clamorous wings.

If the road leads to deserts sere
And the soul is on sorrow's brink
May you find old Jacob's ancient well
And drink, and drink, and drink.

Healing is Feeling Love's Presence

JOHN ALLAN

Healed of a major illness in 1974, this author uses the power of love to help heal others.

Several weeks ago, I awoke in the middle of the night with a severe physical disturbance. As I worked to alleviate the symptoms, suddenly the words, "What is healing?" formed in my mind. Immediately, a soft light appeared to dawn in my head. And love's presence was there. The physical disturbance stopped. And I saw that within the light was the answer to the question: healing is feeling love's presence.

I remember the first major healing happened with my dad. I received a call from Florida. The doctor said, "You better get down here fast. Your dad has had a serious heart attack. He might die." All the while on the plane I worked to help dad. By work, I mean I lifted him up mentally and spiritually above the matter condition. Instead of seeing him as a poor mortal laying in a hospital bed with tubes sticking out of his body, I saw him as an eternal being untouched by any material problem. As I continued seeing him this way, love began working in me. Incredible waves of love poured forth from me and enveloped dad.

The following morning I met dad's doctor at the hospital. "How is he doing?" I asked. The doctor shook his head. "I don't know." My heart dropped. "What do you mean, you don't know?" I asked. He shook his head again. "I just don't know what to make of it. Yesterday your father had a very serious heart attack with a lot of heart damage. Today we can't

The author of The Kingdom of God, Conversations in Spirit, *and* The Healing Energy of Love, *John Allan is currently working on a new book. He lives in Cambria, CA.*

find a sign that he even had a heart attack?" Then the doctor said something that I've seldom heard doctors say. "It's miraculous. It's really miraculous."

If I could share with you a healing I had. In 1974 I contracted what was deemed to be terminal cancer. I had made a decision that if ever this happened to me, I wouldn't have surgery. I saw my brother die from a brain tumor, at age 36. After his operation he couldn't talk, walk, write or think. In six months he was dead. So you can understand why I took this stance. If I was going to die, then I wanted some quality of life while I lived.

Now I had only one place to turn and that was to God. I'd like to tell you that Spirit healed me immediately. But that didn't happen. I struggled immensely with the disease and went slowly downhill for the next year.

Finally there came a day when I "knew" I was going to die. I simply didn't have enough physical energy to carry on. You might think this

Janet Gnall

was a terrifying moment for me. But it wasn't. I was relieved, because now I could finally stop struggling, trying to save my life. And that's when a momentous thing happened. As the last vestige of human energy left me, a powerful implosion of Spirit's energy filled me. I was humanly emptied out inside. This is how it felt. I was an empty shell. And within that shell was Spirit's life, its love.

One would think that with such an infilling of life and love, I would have been healed immediately. But I wasn't. I still had to discover over the years how to apply this new-found life to my body and mind. After the fact, I'm glad for the long-term healing, because I learned so much. I learned how to live with Spirit and to apply spirit to our human ills. And I learned better how to help people. For as I was helped and healed through this energy of love, so I discovered I could help others as I sent them the love.

Finally, there's the story of Julie. My wife and I are visiting volunteers at County General Hospital. We go from room to room to see if anyone wants to visit. We don't try to talk about spiritual things unless the patients bring it up.

People have so much pain in their lives. You see this especially in the hospital. Most patients don't want you to give them advice or tell them how great God is. They want to be listened to. They want to tell you about their pain, their fear, their sorrow. They want to tell you how hard life is for them. They want an understanding and compassionate ear and heart.

One morning as I was walking along the hospital corridor, I peered into a room. Laying in bed was one of the most beautiful women—outside of my wife—that I've ever seen in my life. She was truly a blond haired, blue-eyed beauty. And I wondered what in the world is she in here for. I found out that day. She had AIDS.

I don't know whether you have been around AIDS patients very much. We have. Almost all the AIDS patients in the area are sent to County General. We've had so many love affairs with these people, probably because most of them are loving, caring, aware and sensitive human beings.

Over the months that Julie was in the hospital, the three of us would often talk. But our conversations never went very deep. So one day, I decided I was going to broach the subject of Spirit with her, because she was getting weaker and looking more emaciated. So my wife, Tish, and

I went into her room. We hugged and talked for a bit. Then I took her hand and said, "Julie, do you believe in God, or have you ever experienced God's presence." She shook her head, "No, not since Sunday school have I believed in God. I think it's all a myth."

[The doctor] shook his head again. "I just don't know what to make of it. Yesterday your father had a very serious heart attack with a lot of damage. Today we can't find a sign that he even had a heart attack."

"Do I ever understand that," I said. "I used to feel that way too. In college. I studied a lot of philosophy, psychology and religion. I was "enlightened," through my studies. So much so that I called myself an atheist, for a while. But I wasn't happy. In fact, I was miserable, Julie. I was twenty-three years old. I had a wife and a child on the way. I was in a business I detested. And I didn't know whether I could make it in the world.

"I remember, Julie, one night, I sat down in my chair, turned out the lights, and from that deep, inner darkness, I cried out, 'God, if you're there, please show me.' Nothing happened for a while. Then as I waited, for what I didn't know, a power came over me. And as I yielded to it, I was transported into a universe of pure love. It was the most beautiful and joyous experience of my life. I was there, Julie. I was in Spirit. From that day on, I knew there was a God."

And then I said to Julie "Can I suggest something? As I told you, I went through cancer. So I know how bad the nights can be. I used to keep my light on at night because the darkness was so frightening. So many dark, evil thoughts arose. Maybe, Julie, sometime in the middle of the night you might reach out, in your own way, and just ask God, 'Are you there? Can you help me?' Or use any words that come to you. You may find something will happen."

Several days later, Julie hailed us into the room. "John, Tish" she said, excitedly, "you know what happened? The other night, I did ask God for help. And then I fell asleep. And I had a dream. In this dream, God took away my fear. I never told you that I've always had this awful fear of death. When I got AIDs, the fear increased horribly. But now God has taken away that fear. God just plucked it out of me and took it away.

Then looking us square in the eyes, she said, "You know something, I'm not quite so sure that it was a dream."

We were with Julie the last day she was on earth. We hugged and loved. Then we stood by her bed sending to her the love we felt from Spirit. Somewhere along the way, she sat bolt upright in bed. Her beautiful body had deteriorated into flesh hanging from bones. Looking off into space, she whispered, "It's beautiful. It's so beautiful." We think we knew what Julie meant. We think she was viewing that kingdom of love that's beyond the body. And it's here right now. To some degree, we all can experience that kingdom of love. It's really God's gift to us.

As Day Follows Night

AVIS CROWE

"What if morning never comes? What if it never gets light?" For this writer the test of faith comes in the darkness.

An October night, cold and clear. I was snuggled in my sleeping bag on a creaky bunk bed at the Pinyon Canyon YWCA camp. It was the biannual Friendly Women's Retreat, a time when Quaker women from around the state of New Mexico come together to share their lives through play, worship, and preparing and eating an embarrassing amount of food! Most women choose to sleep on the floor of the large main room, dragging mattresses from the bunkroom to make for a more comfortable night. I have usually done the same, delighting in the soft, gentle breathing of so many women nearby and watching the dying embers of the evening fire in the huge stone fireplace. There were echoes of summer camp there. I also relished the return of the little girl who loved to "sleep over," whispering secrets to a friend way past bedtime, or huddling over a good book with a flashlight under the covers after time for lights out. These were delicious moments of childhood, revisited with pleasure. Others must have felt the same, for they were accompanied by a wide variety of stuffed companions: a brand new duck-billed platypus, a large raccoon, a panda-bear, and lots of teddies—dressed and undressed—some new, others faded and worn from years of love. This time, I had screwed up my courage and brought Puella, my own bear, a special gift from my husband who himself had gotten one from his grandchildren and named him Puer.

But this night I felt the need to be alone. I had arrived late, and the choice spots on the floor had already been staked out; conversations were under way that would no doubt last well into the night, and I wanted to sleep. In the relative quiet of the dormitory, I settled in with Puella. My flashlight was close at hand, my watch strapped to the bunk's head-bar. I often waken during the night, and am disconcerted if I don't know the time. (Is it almost time to get up, I want to know . . . or have I just fallen

A writer residing in New Mexico, Avis Crowe is a regular contributor to FiP.

asleep?) I had chosen a lower bunk at the corner end of the room with windows at both head and side. I lay there looking up at the stars, brilliant in the darkness unmarred by city lights. The murmur of voices gently drifted down the corridor in a kind of lullaby; I slipped into sleep.

I wakened to a miraculous stillness; my breathing the only sound in the universe. Through the window I could just make out the silhouettes of trees against the star-spangled darkness. I groped for my flashlight and cast a quick glance at the time: 6:30. Maybe I'll get up and have an early cup of coffee, I thought. And proceeded to drop off to sleep again. When I woke the second time, my watch still registered 6:30, and outside it

Paul M. Schrock

was still pitch dark. In my semi-wakeful state I was disoriented. Looking out into the dark world I thought, "What if morning never comes?" "What if it never gets light?" For a brief, frightening moment I felt panic. Yet almost as soon as it had come, the terror disappeared. My mind, clearing a bit from the fog of sleep, told me that I had simply misread my watch the first time, and it had really been 5:30. And that dawn's light would soon replace the dark, and all would be as it should be. The rhythm of the world was as it always had been . . . day becoming night, night giving way to morning, darkness following light, light yielding to shadow.

I lay fully awake, relishing the last quiet moments before others began stirring into the new day. Even though all I could see around me was darkness, I knew the sun would soon rise bringing an end to night. It was a law of nature; I could trust it. This, I thought, is what faith is all about: trusting that the darkness will come to an end: knowing that even when I can't see the light, it is there. And recognizing even that it is against the darkest dark that I can see the stars with the greatest clarity.

A Meditation

LISA BOSCANE

My body is failing slowly like an October afternoon whose fickle sky slips toward the starlit night.

My life is here; so long forgotten, it merges into its full being, time and space abolished. Beige, oblique table legs play with motes glittering in sunlight.

Things show through like a mystery, so near I have only to close my eyes and be immersed in them.

Passions doze incurably, under earth so bare it can nurture them no more.

My weakened body has freed its captive soul and is growing respon-

Howard Brown

Lisa Boscane is a member of the Poor Clare community in Nice-Cimiez, France. Her meditation comes from her latest volume of poetry, the highly acclaimed Chemins *(Paris, Éditions Saint Germain-dès-Prés, Paris, 1986). It was translated by Mary McCarthy, R.S.M., Professor of French at Georgian Court College in Lakewood, NJ.*

sive to the spirit; memory, like a river of tenderness returning to its source, comes to immerge it.

Nothing is left for me
but beloved faces.

They are here, living and dead, intensely alive, more real than the rose caressing my face.

Is it the time which has passed or the mystery of life surrounding me on all sides that is coming to light?

Now my memory appears to be God's memory in my life. Now gently God whispers his presence where I had been unaware of it.

Now I have the impression of other eyes opening new worlds in those eyes so deeply, so totally loved.

I hear the voices of those I loved chanting symphonically within my body
They turn into chant and, humbly, praise for life received and accepted, for life given.

For life which cannot cease to be.

That reminds me of the Rose
waiting for me east of the seas.

Anonymous American Indian Prayer

Do not stand by my grave
and weep.
I am not there,
I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that
blow,
I am the diamond glint on
snow,
I am the sunlight on ripened
grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain,
When you wake in the morning
hush.
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circling
flight,
I am the soft starlight at night.
Do not stand by my grave
and weep.
I am not there,
I do not sleep.
In memory of June Foresman Batterberry

* * * * *

May it be Thy will, O Lord, our God and God of our ancestors, that we recall before Thee the remembrance of our ancestors as they approached Thee in the days of old when they brought their obligatory offerings, the regular *tamid* offerings and *musaf* offerings according to rule. Ever since our Temple has been destroyed and we were exiled from our Land the entreaty of our lips and the meditation of our heart have become like unto the sacrifices which our forebears offered up before Thee. Can we

be content with a gift of mere words that costs us neither labor nor privation? Shall we not feel impelled to devote of our substance to the service of God? Shall we not give of our store to the relief of suffering, the healing of sickness, the dispelling of ignorance and error? In the words of Thy prophet: from Zion shall come forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Moreover it is said: the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

High Holiday Prayer Book (Reconstructionist)

* * * * *

Guard me from partiality and arrogance, from anger and stringency, from melancholy and rumor-mongering and from other evil traits. Save me from the envy of others and others' envy of me. Rather, put it in my heart that I see my neighbor's virtue and not my neighbor's shortcoming.

R. Eliezer of Lizhensk (Hasidic)

* * * * *

May you be answered in Heaven in full response of loving mercy. May your imploring prayers be answered, your entreaty accepted and your appeal with favor. May the Lord our God open to you and all Israel:

The Gates of Prayer
The Gates of Quietude
The Gates of Torah.

May God remove from among you envy, contention, and hatred. May God fulfill for you the biblical word, "The Lord God of your fathers multiply you a thousandfold and bless you as promised you." May God inscribe you for good in the book of life. May this be God's will, and let us say, Amen.

Prayers for the Day of Atonement (Sephardic)

* * * * *

MAY THE ETERNAL (YHWH) BLESS YOU with every good
AND KEEP YOU from all harm

AND ENLIGHTEN your heart with discretion in life
AND BE GRACIOUS UNTO YOU with everlasting knowledge
AND LIFT UP a kindly countenance towards you for eternal peace.
Qumran expansion of the Priestly Blessing (Numbers 6.22-27)

The prayers from Jewish devotion were translated from the original Hebrew by Dr. Eric L. Friedland, who teaches in the Religion Department at Wright State University in Dayton, OH.

Janet Gnall

Members of Fellowship in Prayer in 80 countries from a global spiritual community of men and women—many of whom organize groups or correspond with each other in order to share spiritual insights and to pray for each other. If you would like to hear from or write to people in our Interfaith Network, please send us your name and address, and we will list it in our next issue.

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Encountering God

HUSTON SMITH

Since we have different temperaments, we need to take different approaches to God. When this Protestant author came across the Hindu doctrine of the four yogas, he found a way compatible with his own temperament and with his faith.

I must confess that the prospect of sharing what it's like to have a day-to-day, moment-to-moment personal relationship with God made me apprehensive. Why? Was it the presumption that I have a moment-to-moment relationship with God—one that I am consciously aware of? Or was my reluctance one of good taste, the issue of whether it's appropriate to parade intimacies in public? Underlying these doubts was the question of whether I know what my relationship to God is. The arrangement feels more like a mystery out of which my life is lived, rather than a relationship that is open to my conscious awareness and direct inspection.

In the end, though, the premise that we can learn from one another on this matter prevailed.

When, on the National Broadcasting Company's "Wisdom" series I asked Daisetz Suzuki if he was born with a religious impulse, he answered, "Not born, but it awakened."

"When did it awaken in you?" I wanted to know.

"Well, I do not know exactly. But the starting point was marked, perhaps, when I was sixteen or seventeen. I wanted to get my religious yearnings somehow settled."

I could have answered the same: the deepest yearnings of which I am consciously aware have always been religious. I consider the religious impulse to be a part of the human makeup; the search for cosmic under-

A distinguished teacher, lecturer and filmmaker, Huston Smith has devoted much of his energy to building bridges between the East and the West. Among his books is the classic, The Religions of Man, *which has sold over two million copies. He holds seven honorary degrees and his films on world religions have all won international awards. Professor Smith's article is reprinted with permission from* For the Love of God, *Benjamin Shield, Ed., New World Library, San Rafael, CA.*

standing is as much a part of the religious impulse as is the search for cosmic belonging. In my case, though, early conditioning doubtless contributed to the strength of the drive, for my parents were missionaries in China and I grew up in a devoutly religious home.

> In my best moments I am drawn to . . . God as moth to flame, and at such times I do not know whether my happiness is the rarest or the commonest thing on earth, for all earthly things seem to reflect it.

Because we were the only Westerners in our small Chinese town, I was imprinted by my parental role models. When I came to America for college I assumed that it was to obtain credentials for returning to China as a missionary in my own right. The dynamism of the West soon changed that prospect, however. Central Methodist College boasted only six hundred students, and the population of Fayette, Missouri, was less than three thousand, but compared with small-town China it was exciting to the point of extinguishing all thoughts of returning to the Orient. My religious impulse remained intact, however, so I decided that instead of being a missionary I would be a minister.

A second vocational shift occurred during my junior year in college, when the intellect became real for me. A brilliant and charismatic philosophy professor deserves much of the credit, but I can actually date the night the conversion occurred. During a meeting of our philosophy club my excitement had been mounting all evening, and as we walked back to our dormitory my mind seemed to explode from within. Old walls were shattered, and beyond them there was nothing between me and the Infinite. I wonder if I slept at all that night. I would have not recognized the words then, but that night I discovered I was a *jnana yogin*, one whose primary approach to God is through knowledge (more on this point later). Almost at once I shifted my vocational plans toward teaching.

The intellectual excitement I felt continued during my graduate years at the University of Chicago, but my work there in philosophy and religion focused, as had my undergraduate program, exclusively on the West, so it was only after I started teaching that I discovered that spiritual wisdom was not a Western monopoly. This occurred first through

Janet Gnall

the writings and then through the friendship of Gerald Heard and his intellectual partner, Aldous Huxley. I discovered the mystics, and because the mystics speak a universal language, their writing led me successively through the Vedanta, Buddhism, and Sufism, spending roughly a decade at each stop. At no point on this journey did I feel that I was leaving anything behind, least of all Christianity, for after Asia had opened my eyes I discovered there were Jewish and Christian mystics, too. My pilgrimage simply confirmed the same essential truths by revealing them in different idioms.

My relationship with God through my mid-twenties was cast in a Protestant, pietistic mold wherein God was approached through a personal, love-and-service relationship with Christ. I continue to honor that mode and to work on it in part. But, in addition, the Hindu doctrine of the four yogas—the notion that people are of different spiritual temperaments and therefore will approach God in different ways: *jnanis* through knowledge, *bhaktis* through love, *karmic* types through service, and *rajic* types through meditation—freed me to see that there were other channels through which spiritual energies may flow. My personal relationship with Christ, though real, was not very intense, whereas thoughts of God could hold me spellbound for an entire night.

Such *jnanic* knowledge is apt to be misunderstood by those who have not experienced it—by those whose yogic strengths lie elsewhere. It has nothing to do with quantity of information or logical dexterity. It is rather that thoughts, for the *jnanic*, possess a body of sorts, a three-dimensional substantiality that makes thoughts real in ways they are not for other people. Plato's ideas, for example—the Good, the True, and the Beautiful—for the *jnanic* (or gnostics, as they might be called in the West if that word is distinguished from gnosticism), are not the empty abstractions that others take them for. They are almost palpably real. And their reality excites; they all but dance and sing. This distinguishes the theoria that discusses them from theories as these typically function in science. The Greek word *theoria* derived from the theater, which makes *jnanic* knowledge closer to vision than to thought as we usually use the word. It is seeing, albeit with the eye of the soul. And the vision attracts. Aristotle compounded Goodness, Truth, and Beauty into his Unmoved Mover, which moves the entire universe by force of attraction. But my point is that ideas attract *jnanis*, who are drawn to ideas because they love them—and we are drawn to and become like that which we love.

Cliff Moore

Socrates said that to know the good is to do it. Saint Paul disagreed, but he was a different temperamental type—a *bhakti* rather than a *jnani* yogin—so knowing was not the same for the two men.

This all relates to God, for though I have not used the word, I have been speaking of nothing else. God is the Good, the True, the Beautiful—and Power and Mystery, we should add—fused so completely that the five are not five but one. In my best moments I am drawn to that God as moth to flame, and at such times I do not know whether my happiness is the rarest or the commonest thing on earth, for all earthly things seem to reflect it. But I cannot hold onto it. When those grace-filled moments arrive, it does not seem strange to be so happy, but in retrospect I wonder how such gold of Eden could have been mine.

It is easy to make too much of direct mystical disclosures. Desert stretches provide opportunities for growth that are as important as mountaintop experiences, and theologians assure us that souls can be established in an abiding relationship with God without being sensibly aware of God's presence. The goal is not altered states by altered traits. Aldous Huxley's observation that the task of life is to overcome the fundamental human disability of egoism comes in here, for every step we take in overcoming that is in God's direction.

Embracing Loneliness, Finding Love . . .

SANDRA GILBERT

Here is a story of very deep pain transformed into love.

Please send the story of your own "transforming experience" (typed and double spaced), to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

> Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. It is not necessary to seek for what is true, but it is necessary to seek for what is false. Every illusion is one of fear, whatever form it takes.
> *From A Course in Miracles*

Deep feelings of longing, loneliness and neediness have always been with me. For instance, I have a vivid memory from childhood of wanting to have a particular, beautiful Siamese cat. I thought having her would fill a void and help me to feel less lonely. But I already had two cats, and a third could not have alleviated the loneliness. So I went on believing that something "out there" could be changed or rearranged to help me feel less empty and abandoned. It never occurred to me that the problem was not the feelings I was having but the thoughts that I had about the feelings.

Later on, I attempted to use people and various kinds of addictive behavior to satisfy my deep craving and sense of loneliness and separation from the rest of the world. Although my life was successful by conventional standards, I went on feeling empty inside. In fact at the time, my life was seemingly full—I had a husband, 3 children, many friends, a beautiful home and a horse farm—but I was in a profound state of despair—feeling very much alone. It was then that I made a serious attempt to end my life.

A long period of recovery from this trauma ensued, during which my

Sandy Gilbert has made a lifelong study of meditation with a number of teachers. She has a spiritual counseling practice and leads meditation groups in Pennington, NJ.

Sandra Gilbert

life was forever altered. The marriage ended, the children grew up, my home and farm were sold. It was then that I began to earnestly seek God. Until then I had sought God in unfulfilling, unsatisfactory and incomplete ways. Now my entire focus was on seeking and finding God.

In the past I had sought God outside of myself, but now I was led to seek within. I began to meditate for long periods of time every day, to read inspirational material, and to share my experience with other people who were also seeking God. I spent several hours each day in devotional work. The most important part of my life, my sole purpose, was to know God.

It was during this time that I began attending workshops on the spiritual life. I was deeply inspired and moved by the beautiful work of one particular spiritual teacher, Stephen Schwartz. It has helped move me to a place in my heart where I feel open to life and at peace with myself. I now understand that my fearful feelings of loneliness and emptiness are actually a longing to experience God in my own heart. This understanding has totally changed my relationship to myself and to God.

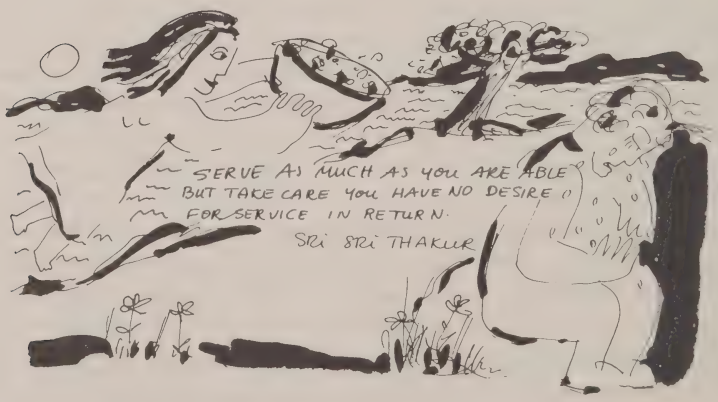
The very process of accepting and embracing our feelings, whatever

we might choose to call them, is how we can say "Yes!" to life, to love, and to God. The feelings of pain, hurt and anger result when *love* is withheld. God lives in the heart of every man and woman, and in order to experience God, we need only surrender in silence to all that is found there and become like a teachable little child. There is nothing to be changed or gotten rid of, but only accepted, to allow God to transform it into love.

I now feel very called to service and to help others to open their hearts by surrendering and allowing their own unique gifts to be expressed. My own gift is love in the form of deep compassion and caring for others. In my own small way, I am able to guide people in the process of awaking to the truth.

It didn't occur to me that the problem was not the feelings I was having, but the thoughts that I had about the feelings.

I am extremely grateful to all of the people who have helped me along the way, and there have been many. I do not regret my painful past, because it has brought me to this beautiful present. My life is full of mystery and expectancy, and I have no idea where I am going or what my future holds. I totally trust God and the guidance I receive from God. My personal understanding is that God guides us every step of the way and lives through us as a unique expression of love.



Gisela Lichtgarn

Ask Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN

Do you have a question of the heart or spirit that needs attention? Angela, our canine sage-in-residence, would love to help. Please write to her c/o F.i.P., 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542, and she will give you her answer in our next issue.

Dear Angela,

As an avid reader of your column, I seem to recall that you moved sometime this past year. I will be moving very shortly and need some expert advice. Any tips you can share with me will be greatly appreciated. Many thanks.

Sincerely,
On the Move

Dear On the Move,

Thank you for taking time out from packing, sorting, and wrapping to write to me. Whether it's across the street or across an ocean, moving is a major life event. We do seem to be a nation coming and going quite a bit. Many of my canine acquaintances tell me they have bones buried in more than one backyard.

Let's face facts. Moving is like getting a flea bath that lasts a month. Losing your beloved sacred space underneath the livingroom couch is traumatic, even if you are trading that spot for an entire sacred basement all to yourself. Since moving does seem to be such a part of our lives, we would all do well to learn how to cope more effectively with the stresses and strains that such a project entails.

The first thing to do is to go through your belongings. Perhaps there are a few odd bones you've uncovered that have lost their scent, or you've found an old flea collar that doesn't work. Begin to throw these useless items away. One of the positive things about moving is that it offers us an opportunity to let go, clean out, and lighten up. When I allowed myself to part with a few dead tennis balls, I experienced more space and air

in my life. Enjoy the throwing out, the giving away, and the garage sale, too. Stay with the parting process until you feel a twinge of pain. Once you start missing things you've just seen the garbage men haul away, you'll be making real progress. The throwing-away process is crucial. It offers everyone an opportunity to stroll and sniff down Memory Lane. Take time to lovingly review the history you've made in the house you are leaving. This is part of the parting process. You really can't leave home without it.

When chaos begins to grow like weeds around, know you are into the last few days before moving. This is the time when life will require you to respond to the situation appropriately. It is time to begin to scurry from room to room sniffing. Pace back and forth between rooms, feeling lost and upset in between packing-up boxes. Moving brings out these feelings in us, so just relax and enjoy them.

While you are preoccupied with packing and pacing, make sure that you keep a spot for yourself that remains undisturbed. It is a must to save yourself a sacred corner that doesn't get packed or dismantled until the very last day. Allow yourself time to go to your corner for safety and peace. While my family packed, I spent many minutes of comfort between panic attacks underneath the livingroom couch. It was dark and quiet and a place where no one was packing.

Another critical part of the moving process is saying good-bye to your neighborhood. I took many walks before I moved, sniffing all my beloved scents for posterity. In the last few days, take a few minutes to sit under your favorite tree and gaze at your favorite view. Here it is appropriate to acknowledge that there are some views you have grown to love and that you'll miss. Keep in mind, of course, that there are new views just over the horizon. Leave time for these partings, and feel any sadness you have.

Design and carry out a simple leave-taking ceremony that allows you to feel okay and complete about leaving your home. Keep in mind that this was your home because you made it so, and you will do so again in your new place. Remember, there is truth to the statement "Home is where the blankie is." Remember, too, it is easier to say hello gleefully when you have said good-bye completely.

It is time to look to the future. In your new house, investigate all rooms carefully and completely. Wander through your rooms, sniffing every corner. Test all corners for comfort before placing your blankie

down in a permanent location. Choose this corner as your new official sacred space. Run to each window. Memorize each new view. From this vantage point, check out your new neighbors. Growl at your new mailman. Canvass your new neighborhood with a good friend. Memorize how to get home from every direction. Allow yourself to feel homesick. When outside, stand quietly with your nose to the wind, sniffing toward home. Investigate all new trees, shrubs, and utility poles.

In your new house, create for yourself a ritual or ceremony of greeting. This can be as simple as lighting a candle, ordering a pizza and eating it picnic style on the livingroom floor, or lying on a new piece of furniture that you're not supposed to be up on.

My best advice to you is to get out of town and go to a pleasant location with a temperate, sunny climate the day the moving van pulls up. Getting away from it all at this crucial time can be the most effective way of coping with a move.

I myself *did* get out of town on moving day and for a number of days afterward, too. I got dipped for fleas at the vet's. This is not the cheery, fun-filled alternative that I am referring to.

I hope I have been of some help to you and all those who will be moving in the near future. This is one instance where there is really no way through it but to do it. I wish you well and hope you settle in soon.

Faithfully,
Angela

Home Again, Home Again . . .

JANE HUGGINS

Deep feelings of nostalgia and timelessness well up in this poignant reflection on going home.

I went home recently. My plane landed, my rental car was waiting and I found my way with minimal direction. I drove past the houses on the farm which my mother had remodeled and noted that they were still beautiful to me. I then pulled up in front of the "little" house where my father was living. I had not stepped inside my father's door since my mother died four and one-half (he reminded me) years ago. I was at once humiliated and frightened—not quite knowing what I would find and not quite able to cross that threshold which said I didn't care—so in I went.

My father came to hug me—and his dogs wagged their tails. I wasn't quite sure what I loved most—his embrace or that particular sense of home which I hadn't felt in quite a while. The dogs and I were introduced. There was Mike, the "boss"; Tuttles, the "little" one; and Bozie—"all skin and bone, part-Greyhound who had wondered up alongside the road with the number 13 painted on his side." I was intrigued. So these were my father's friends.

I pulled my suitcase from the car and managed to wobble through the house where my mother had once been. My father had salvaged, amidst the chaos which followed her death, many of the bits and pieces of her that he most cherished: A table they had bought together, her favorite upholstered chair, a picture she liked but he had never understood, her draperies with the word "happiness" written on them.

I paused, then sat, and ached and rocked and felt anew what these two people had meant to each other and to me. Her warmth was not there to greet me. Her supper was not on the stove. And she had not turned down my bed. But in spite of these spasms of grief I attempted to adjust. The house was cold and it was not "spic and span" as my father had

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Janet Gnall

informed me on the phone. I didn't appreciate fully his understatement till I got there. But, it seemed to me that our greatest challenge was not physical surroundings but our need to relate to each other in the vacuum of my mother's death.

As my soul began to register the change—I relaxed a bit and went to sit on the porch with my old (by now) father and his dogs, to talk and to listen to the acorns drop on the floor. The dogs wagged their tails (again) and we attempted to make friends and my father and I sat across from one another and talked—about how he felt—how was I—how were we. And we began once again to pick up our rhythm, ancient, yet not forgotten; a pause here, a breath there, a wish stated, a regret named. And I began to relax and to listen once again. We spoke of the farm, of the changes made since I last had seen it, what had come and gone—and what was no more. And out of this arose the melancholy of long unheard voices—of songs unsung—and we mellowed with the poignancy of that

moment. And I was refreshed—it was this getting to know again, this remembering for which I had come—it was also, in part, a dis-membering—a grasping at what was no longer and a painful gasping at what was and had been a part of my life.

Our routine became established as I had work to do the next day and the next day and so on but in the evening we would try again to re-know, re-love and re-share our feelings about one another, about the world, about what was deeply meaningful. And I became accustomed to the dogs—and they to me—and I loved my father and began to appreciate some of the grace with which I had been blessed by association with him. He is not sociable, nor always easy to understand, but he is my father and it has taken a while in the knowing, getting to know—to appreciate him.

Some of our discussions rambled, but they always did. I learned again my favorite Lawrence Welk litany and I daydreamed in the shadows of the house which was once mine as I listened to the music of ages and years gone by. It was a hopeful passing—marred only by the grief we often found difficult to express—and lightened by a visit with his family (my family) of aunts and uncles with stories to tell and arms to embrace and confidences to share. Although not the same, it was the same. I again know that what was lost is now found.

Sufism: One Path to Peace

K.M.P. MOHAMED CASSIM

We are all members of one huge family called humanity with one common purpose. According to Sufism that one common goal is to attain God-Realization. Today people in every land are faced with innumerable problems that were unknown to their ancestors because of modern technological civilization. Modern humanity is so much involved in sensual activities that mental energy is wasted enormously. Hence, it is essential to practice meditation systematically. Then only is there the possibility of reducing the wastage of energy. In other words, by keeping one's mind in a state of stillness through meditation, the amount of energy that is dissipated through the cerebro-spinal system and the ceaseless cellular activities in the physical body is substantially minimised. All the faculties with which the human mind is equipped are brought into full play and capacity. The state of meditation in no way brings about a lethargic condition of the mind or senses, but actually it creates an awareness full of dynamism and the optimum use of the mind and the senses.

Sufism stresses the importance of spiritual training. In this practice what is required is a discipline of the entire being of the person, not merely the intellect (since spiritual illumination is not dependent on scholarship and logical thinking). At the end of a long and sustained spiritual practice which involves firm control of the sense organs and the mind, there is the possibility of purging the mind of all its impurities. So long as there is desire in the mind, the true state of *fana* cannot be experienced, because the craving of the mind for pleasures is always restless and unhappy. *Fana*, a pure and sublime feeling untouched and uncorrupted by thoughts or desires, means dying. What dies is the ego, life's heaviest burden, which creates all our tension, misery, mischief and conflict. *Fana* is complete only when one dies to every thought, desire, despair, and hope and ambition of the ego. It is only by dying that one shall be able to find the joy of living.

The ultimate purpose of Sufism is the crucifixation of the egoistic per-

Dr. Mohamed Cassim is a spiritual leader in Sri Lanka.

Tom Dunham

sonality and rising up into a new consciousness of our eternal oneness with the Supreme Reality, Allah. The state of *baga* implies the death of one human ego and resurrection into the divine consciousness. This spiritual awakening or divine elevation is achieved after passing through the experience of *fana* and the silence of the great void.

Sufism makes a strong plea that the lasting solution for human problems can be found only when the mind reaches the state of *fana* because it constitutes not only the cessation of mental activities through choiceless awareness, but also freedom. The mind rests in perfect silence and emptiness. We understand ourselves and there is wisdom in that understanding.

Sufism emphasizes the importance of leading a pure life and practising a spiritual discipline so that the whole psycho-physical constitution of the seeker may become changed and purified. This self-discipline gives the seeker not only the necessary strength to bear the impact of mental agitation, but also enables one to stand the strains of any inner struggle.

Meditation (*Muragabah*) implies a state of alertness where no thought interferes and in that state we explore not only the various aspects of the mind, but also of the senses. Normally we act out of opinion or out of intentions, but meditation is the action of silence. Meditation normalises the nervous system, increases the orderly functioning of the brain, promotes integrated thinking and regulated behaviour.

Concentration is the preliminary process by which the diversified rays of the mind are brought to a single point, and meditation is the divine method by which the mind is ultimately rendered silent. The state of meditative silence not only helps us to commune with Allah but also releases the mind from its restlessness. All forms of spiritual discipline aim at tranquillizing the mind. Specialists in psychosomatic medicine and psychiatry have come to show a good deal of interest in meditation, since it eliminates psychological tensions and counteracts bad influences that cause disintegration of the personality. Relaxation, both mental and physical, is becoming more and more essential in the fast-moving, hurly-burly world in which we live.

Sufism holds the view that it is useless to look for peace or relaxation outside ourselves; it must come from within through a life of meditation. In the silent mind alone one can attain full spiritual satisfaction. The best way to attain freedom is by egoless love, egoless work, egoless contemplation and egoless knowledge, which means one has to surrender and

sacrifice everything the ego craves. In the present-day world when a crisis of character is eating away at human values, it is our sacred duty to liberate human consciousness from the grip of perpetual conflict by emphasizing the importance of the spiritual life. A lone person of meditation can perform the right action in which there will be no regrets, no confusion and no contradiction.

In meditation we live in this world without being controlled by images of pleasure or pain. In this profound state, *Muragabah*, we actually discover the origin of thinking. Then we enter into a new dimension where the divine unification, *tawhid*, can take place spontaneously and effortlessly. Free and happy indeed are those who live in a state of perfect peace and egolessness, for they are able to understand and appreciate the unending beauty of life.

THIS IS VERY TRUE:
WHENEVER THE TEN-
DENCY GROWS TO SEE
ANOTHER'S FAULT, THEN THAT
FAULT HAS MADE ITS HOME
IN YOU. SRI SRI THAKUR

Gisela Lichtgarn

Roody and Me

ERIN B. CHARLES

As Christians all over the world celebrate Holy Week, a graduate student focusses on Golgotha, where Christ died.

Still standing. Eons and eons have passed and I've grown now in the forest. Oh, I could go on forever about my life and what I've seen—but I think I'll touch on a story which I think about often.

I was young; I hadn't even a trunk yet, just a skinny twig with a few leaves. However, I shan't ever forget about Roody.* He was an old tree that kept me cool when it was hot. One day, some men chopped him down; though I was young, I missed him.

A few days passed, and I thought I would never again see Roody, but I did, in a very different light. His leaves and bark were gone; he had a distinctive shape, and someone was carrying him. The man looked as though he was in pain. But I knew Roody; he wouldn't hurt anyone, especially that man. The man looked sorrowful, but had a gleam of hope in his eyes; he even looked at me, but I kept my eyes on ol' Roody.

When the man and Roody got up the hill, almost where I was standing, that man dropped Roody. I was so mad, I wanted to run over and save him, but I knew Roody was strong and he was okay. Then it dawned on me. I saw other men take off the man's clothes. "Maybe he's in trouble," I thought. I had a funny feeling that this man was a good man; then Roody looked at me and I knew He was good. They put this man on top of Roody; I wasn't afraid 'cause I knew Roody was strong and this man couldn't be too heavy.

A few moments passed, and I saw another man bringing something over to Roody. I knew Roody felt those nails, but he stayed strong for the man, and me.

It was hours and hours that man and Roody had been standing there, but I knew Roody could handle it. The other men were laughing and drinking while this man was thirsty. Poor Roody, he must have been thirsty too. Something about Roody was different now; he wasn't the wise old tree that kept me cool, he was attached to the man—Roody's

*Rood *is the Old English word for cross—Ed.*

Janet Gnall

face of hope began to fade; I thought maybe he was just tired. I was wrong. My friend Roody was dying with this man.

When some people left, I noticed one woman standing there weeping over this man. That's how I felt about Roody, but I knew he wouldn't want to see me cry in his last moments.

The wind began to pick up; the other men went in tents. There they stood, the man and Roody. The man looked up to the sky, and a bolt of lightning fell, the man and Roody were gone . . .

It had been a long night; I couldn't get my eyes off Roody. The other men came out and took the man off Roody. There was that woman again. She held the man, weeping; I think it was his mother. That's funny, 'cause Roody was my father. I was so proud of him; he stood strong and tall for that man. Roody stood strong and tall for me.

Well here I stand, keeping my own son cool; I often tell him about Roody, and even still see him and the man on that hill. I have seen many things, but I have never seen anything so divine in my life. Good ol' Roody, I loved him.

A graduate of Georgian Court College, Erin Charles is currently working on a masters in English at Rutgers University. She is planning a career as a writer.

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